The questions below can be used to guide discussion about the vulnerable populations your health care organization serves and steps your board and leadership can take to ensure ongoing access to health care services.

Use of this discussion guide can be tailored for your board’s needs as part of the agenda for a board education session, leadership retreat, or strategic planning session. The executive staff and all board members should be prepared to address local examples/information as part of this discussion.

1. The report defines a vulnerable community as “a population that, due to their individual circumstances, is much more likely to be in poor health and have disabling conditions” and page 2 of this summary lists characteristics that may make a community vulnerable. Which of the populations or communities we serve could be considered vulnerable? And why?

2. The essential health care services identified in Table 2 below, should be available in every community. Which, if any, of these services are not available in the vulnerable communities our organization serves?

3. Which of the vulnerable communities we serve are less likely to have access to or are not likely to utilize one or more of these essential health care services?

4. Which of the emerging strategies identified on page 3 are most likely to further improve access to essential health care services for the vulnerable populations our organization serves?

5. What are the implications of implementing these strategies in our organization and community? Some areas to consider include strategic compatibility, financial, clinical, workforce, technology, partnerships with other community organizations, and legal and regulatory compliance.

6. Several barriers to implementation are identified in the Task Force Report and many are listed on page 4. Which of these barriers is our organization most likely to encounter? How can we as a board and as an organization advocate to overcome them?

7. What role(s) should our board play in gaining input, buy-in and acceptance from the community to implement new strategies for ensuring access? Some examples include:
   » facilitate community conversations,
   » be prepared to respond to questions from community members, and
   » invite community leaders and organizations to provide input into our organization’s strategic planning process.

8. What assistance, such as education, tools, training and other resources, will our board need to effectively fulfill its community liaison role(s)?

Table 2: Essential Health Care Services

Please contact Priya Bathija at pbathija@aha.org to provide feedback about your board and leadership discussion.